the Vulcan took his blood, desperately conscious of the richly sensual feeling that filled him. The old Terran myth of the vampire came to mind, and he thought dazedly that his soul was well lost if he gained such pleasure in the exchange.

At last Spock raised his head. "So, it is done," he breathed, brushing Kirk's lips lightly. "We are joined now, each to the other, your life mine, and mine yours."

"I am content," Kirk whispered in answer.

"And now I must collar you again, my love. I wish..."

"It doesn't matter, Spock. I understand." Kirk slipped to his knees. "It's the only way we can survive and be together in this world of yours. Put it on."

He watched as Spock opened the casket and lifted out the collar, holding it up for Kirk's inspection. The wide gold band, measured to fit snugly around his throat without chafing, was fashioned so delicately it might have been woven from fine silk. At the back, where the two halves snapped together, an intricate lock had been fitted. This was one of the secrets of Serret's craftsmanship. It required no key. When the two ends had been joined, the collar could only be removed by cutting the metal. An engraved disc set into the front of the collar bore Kirk's name, identifying him as the property of the warrior Spock of the house of Sarek.

"Beautiful workmanship," Spock murmured. "Almost worthy of you, yet it is still a collar.... Wait, what is this?"

Examining the inside of the collar, Spock saw that the fine threads of gold had been interwoven with strands of black silk. He looked down, to surprise a flood of color in Kirk's cheeks.

"Jim? What have you done?"

"Sit down and I'll tell you." Kirk slid along the floor to sit at Spock's feet, his cheek resting against the Vulcan's thigh. "Humans can be hopelessly contradictory, Spock. Once I knew you didn't want to keep me as a slave, I didn't mind being one--at least, not yours. That was what I couldn't bear--the thought that to you I was just a valuable possession. Then you spoke of the oath, and I wanted to do something to show you that I understand the necessity of my bondage. The idea came to me when I was given your hair to burn. I saved a strand, and asked Serret if it could be woven into the metal somehow. You hold me of my own choice, Spock. If I'd stayed with Savak, once I got over the first shock, I'd have killed myself. I was beginning to think of it when you won me."

"And then?"

"Then you were kind. I wanted to live, if I could, so I waited to see what would happen, if my chance would come--and I couldn't take it. I hated my weakness," he kissed Spock's thigh. "Now, now it doesn't matter any more. If my chains keep you safe--I can wear them."

"They do. You hold my life in your hands. Oh, Jim, I love you."

"You didn't at first. You thought I was a mindless barbarian. You didn't even want me! What made you change?"

"I think...when I saw Satak flirting with you, and you laughed with him. I was jealous. I did not want you to laugh for anyone but me."

"Satak was kind. After Savak, I knew you were special, but it was Satak who showed me that not all Vulcans abuse their slaves."

"Savak!" Spock's face darkened with anger. "Richly does he deserve his disgrace!"

"His disgrace?"

"When Selon and his captains came to evaluate the novices, the remembered Savak's treatment of you. They inquired further, and discovered that he is a sadist who has used other slaves with the same brutality. Courage and fighting skill alone do not make a warrior, Jim. We have much power, and are expected to use it responsibly. Savak and those novices who followed his lead showed themselves unworthy of such power. They have been refused initiation, a terrible disgrace at this stage of training."

Kirk pressed his lips to Spock's thigh again in protest. "Must we discuss Savak?"

"Perhaps not--if you can think of a more interesting topic...of....ah...conversation?"

The Human looked up, smiling wickedly. "I'd rather not talk at all," he said, and had his wish as the Vulcan's mouth covered his.

Spock broke the kiss only to pull Kirk to his feet and then over to the bed. For a time they lay together caressing each other's bodies gently, but as they kissed their hands became more urgent, more demanding, until Kirk, filled with a sudden hunger for the taste of the Vulcan's flesh, wriggled out of Spock's arms and turned on the bed, lowering his head to take the Vulcan's penis into his mouth.

Under the insistant stimulation of his lips, the dormant organ began to swell and harden, filling his mouth with its spicy heat. Kirk settled himself closer, grunting contentedly, and began to suck with a slow, demanding pressure. Spock writhed under his touch, his fingers clutching at the Human's hair, his free hand resting on Kirk's face so that he could feel the movements of the busily working mouth. His hips began to thrust upward and Kirk sucked harder, faster, as he sought to take even more. The muscles of his throat relaxed as Spock surged in eager response, then warm creamy liquid filled his mouth and he swallowed avidly, eager for everything Spock could give.

They lay quietly until the trembling in their bodies subsided, then Kirk pulled reluctantly away from the softening penis and moved back up the bed, sighing with satisfaction as he rested his head on the Vulcan's chest. He could feel a hand moving caressingly over his buttocks, and as he lay, his fingers began to play with Spock's nipple.

The Vulcan gasped at the touch. "Please...your mouth..." and Kirk turned his head, his tongue reaching for the green-tinted nipple. It grew erect as he licked it, and he began to suck, nipping the flesh gently between his teeth. Spock's hand left his buttocks, and slid around to fondle his penis, the warmth gradually coaxing him erect until his groin ached with longing.

Satisfied that the Human was fully aroused, Spock released him, hesitated for a moment, then to Kirk's astonishment, the Vulcan spread his long legs wide apart, and pulled him on top.

"Spock? What is it?" Kirk knelt up to study him. "What's wrong?"